

Testimony in Support of S.B 284, AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS.

Dear Chairs Abercrombie and Moore, Vice Chairs Lesser and Leeper, Ranking Members Berthel and Case, and Members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Roxana Grunenwald and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for **S.B. 284 - An Act Increasing the Age from Eight to Eighteen Years for an Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status**. This bill would provide state-funded medical assistance to any child or young adult under the age of eighteen years of age, regardless of immigration status, whose household income does not exceed two hundred one percent of the federal poverty level, and who does not otherwise qualify for Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance 11 Program, or employer-sponsored insurance.

Connecticut's expansion of HUSKY last year to children ages 0-8 years was an important win for immigrants in the state, who have been predominantly challenged by the shortage of healthcare resources available to them. The passage of S.B 284 would expand this win by guaranteeing more access to programs like HUSKY that largely benefit low-income immigrant families and individuals. Undocumented immigrants without coverage must rely on health care safety net resources, such as public hospitals or community clinics, to access needed medical care. Despite serving as important access points, none of these resources is equivalent to having comprehensive health insurance coverage.

Undocumented immigrants in our state pay roughly 145 million dollars into state and local taxes every year, 253 million into federal taxes, out of that 54.6 million goes into medicare and 207.4 million goes into social security according to a study conducted by the New American Economy. Undocumented taxpayers are contributing to the state's health programs, but their status makes them ineligible to access said state health programs. This bill expands the age by 10 years that undocumented taxpayers can receive health benefits that themselves and their families pay for.

This bill is a tremendous step in the right direction, but we really need to expand healthcare access to taxpayers of all ages, as most of the individuals who require medical assistance are over the age of 18 years. However, this bill would allow children and young adults under 18 years, individuals in the educational system, access to glasses, medical care, and physicals needed for sport involvement. This would allow undocumented immigrants to better integrate into their communities and receive a more thorough education such that they can contribute toward society later in life.

In conclusion, I urge you to expand healthcare to the immigrant population because it would allow them to receive the preventative treatment they deserve, reduce the uninsured rate in Connecticut, and save the state money by decreasing uncompensated care costs. Connecticut can and should do better in promoting healthcare as a human right, rather than a commodity that only the wealthy can afford. I urge you to favorably vote this bill out of the Human Services Committee so that more immigrants in the state are able to access and afford health care that they're in desperate need of.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Roxana Grunenwald
New Haven, CT